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ABSTRACT

Based on the observation that speech communication faculty often contribute their expertise in the business world but seldom have the opportunity to do so where administrative policy is concerned, a study was conducted to determine how active the speech communication expert is in the development and implementation of policy on his or her campus. Subjects were 226 members of the Speech Communication Association (SCA) selected from the "Speech Communication Directory," 1980. The subjects, representing four academic ranks, a ratio of men to women similar to that of the SCA, and a variety of sizes and types of institutions, were asked to respond to a 15-question survey by indicating the amount of involvement they had with service to the institution. The return of the survey was 54%, or 122 respondents. According to the results, service in committee work occured frequently, but there was little opportunity for service on committees as communication experts for mediation of conflict, trouble shooters for communication problems, or committee leaders. There was very little opportunity to serve the college administration as spokespersons or speech writers, or as parliamentarians to the faculty senate. There was also little participation in advising administrators on ways of improving vertical communication between administration and faculty, and 91% indicated that they had never been asked to conduct a workshop in listening by their administration. (HTH)

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# Applied Communication: Use of Speech Communication Faculty Expertise In University Administration

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# APPLIED COMMUNICATION: USE OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION FACULTY EXPERTISE IN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

We humans like to be chosen. It is our nature to want to be included in the activities around us. When we have a certain knowledge or skill, it is important to be tapped for that ability by those who are in control. So, it is for the specialist in speech communication. The faculty member has a number of opportunities to contribute his expertise in roles of consultant in industrial and business communication, state, county, and city government, and occasionally in the national government. Within the Speech Communication Association, the Association for Communication Administration has a bureau of consultants formed for the purpose of serving departments of speech communication that need a consultant's help in their efforts for organizational improvement. The university or college campus offers opportunities to serve in committees, faculty senate, and administrative roles in addition to the classroom teaching and research. Indeed, it appears that speech communication people are chosen and included in the activities around them. The opportunities to serve in useful capacity is apparently there for those who wish to take advantage of them.

What about the quality of service? What about the substance of service? Are speech communication faculty asked to contribute their expertise in the process of university policy formation? These questions are raised in this era of growing division that is apparent between faculty and administration on many campuses as a response to economic decline, retrenchment

policies, and dissatisfaction generally with higher education across the nation.

This paper was prepared as an effort to address the question of how active is the speech communication expert in the development and implementation of policy on his campus? An instrument was designed to solicit the responses of the selected subjects in areas of committee work, mediation, and parliamentary competencies. In addition, consultative service to upper level administrators in areas of speech writing, public speaking, vertical communication problems, and listening were probed in the survey.

## Method

### Subjects

Two hundred and twenty-six names were selected from the Speech Communication Directory, 1980, representing approximately four percent of the SCA membership for 1979-1980. The selection of subjects followed the three criteria of; (a) Representation of the four academic ranks; (b) Approximate ratio of men to women in the Association; (c) Size and type of institution.

In an attempt to include subjects from all levels of experience from first year non-tenured instructors to full professors with tenure, the study tapped the diversity of longevity. The rank and percentage of the total that each represents for this study were: Instructor, 34%; Assistant Professor, 30%; Associate Professor, 20%; and Professor, 16%. These percentages are approximately comparable to the national percentages of faculty by rank.[1] The second criterion was included in the

selection process to more accurately reflect the sex of Association membership. In the case of the Speech Communication Association, the membership is 2 men to 1 woman. The study, therefore, contacted one hundred and fifty-five (68%) men and seventy-one (32%) women listed in the Directory, 1980. The third criterion was applied to the selection process to allow for the diversity of types and sizes of institutions in higher education in which members of the speech communication discipline serve. As such, representatives from public and private schools, large and small schools, and junior and senior institutions were included among the subjects surveyed.

Procedures

An instrument was devised containing fifteen statements which attempted to describe types of "service to the institution" activities in which a faculty member would engage. The subject was asked to respond to each of the fifteen statements by marking a semantic scale which best described the amount of involvement he had with the "service to the institution" activity. The respondent could designate "Always", "Frequently", "Occasionally", "Seldom", or "Never" on the scale to each of the items reflecting his experience. Additional space for up to five statements to be added by the respondent was included for more comprehensive coverage of service activities.

The statements on the instrument were:

1. I have served on institutional committees.
2. I have served on department committees.
3. The committees on which I served have used my knowledge of organizational communication.

4. The committees have made use of my knowledge of public speaking.
5. The committee appointment was made because of my knowledge of mass media communication.
6. My work in committees has drawn upon my knowledge of the dynamics of group leadership.
7. When working in committee, my service has been to make use of my knowledge of persuasion strategies.
8. I have been called upon to mediate differences of opinion in my committee work.
9. I have served as parliamentarian for the faculty legislative body.
10. My advice on speaking techniques has been sought by the president of the institution.
11. I have been called upon to make public speeches on behalf of my institution.
12. I have been consulted by the administration on ways to improve vertical communication downward.
13. I have been consulted by the institution's administration on ways to improve vertical communication upward.
14. I have been called to write speeches for administrators of my institution.
15. I have been involved in directing a workshop in listening for top administration of my institution.

Items (1) through (8) seek to identify opportunities in committee work which the faculty member has had to contribute his communication expertise. Items (10) (11) (14) relate the

experience of the communication consultant in service to administrators in the areas of public speech preparation and presentation and being a spokesman for the institution through his oratory. Item (9) refers to faculty governance and the expertise of the communication specialist in parliamentary procedure. Items (12) and (13) seek to probe areas of need in vertical communication problems in the institution which the communication faculty member might be called upon to address. The final item (15) is included to survey the opportunities members of our discipline have had to apply their knowledge to the improvement of listening skills within upper levels of administration. Taken together these fifteen items represent a composite of our discipline; and what we can offer our colleagues in a meaningful manner of service to the institution.

## Results

Of the two hundred and twenty-six subjects contacted, one hundred and twenty-two responded for a 54% return of the survey instruments.[2] The response by rank was: Professor 26 (21%), Associate Professor 38 (31%), Assistant Professor 45 (36%), and Instructor 12 (10%) with one identified as teacher. The ratio of men to women in the group was 2:1. The representation of size and type of institutions among the respondents was comparable to the proportion in the total group originally surveyed.

As previously described, the items on the survey instrument fall into five general categories representing the types of service a communication expert could render to the institution. Again, these general categories of service are: (1) committee work, (2) public speaking, (3) parliamentarian, (4) vertical

communication problems, and (5) listening. The respondents indicate generally that their opportunities to participate in policy formation and implementation are very limited. More specifically the results of the survey reflected mixed participation in terms of general categories and sub-categories. The following table shows how uninvolved the subjects in this study are in terms of the five categories.

Table I

| | Always | Frequently | Occasionally | Seldom | Never | NA | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category I (Committee Work) | | | | | | | |
| Item 1 I Have Served On Institutional Committee | 21 | 38 | 39 | 6 | 17 | 2 | 122 |
| Item 2 I Have Served On Department Committees | 59 | 36 | 20 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 122 |
| Item 3 Comm Used Knowl Of Org Communication | 7 | 25 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 0 | 122 |
| Item 4 Comm Have Used My Knowl Of Pub Speakn | 6 | 20 | 22 | 37 | 37 | 0 | 122 |
| Item 5 Comm Appt Result Of Knowl Mass Media | 1 | 5 | 11 | 24 | 78 | 3 | 122 |
| Item 6 Comm Drawn Upon Knowl Dynamics Gr Ldrshp | 13 | 34 | 37 | 17 | 21 | 0 | 122 |
| Item 7 My Serv To Make Use Of Pers Strategies | 6 | 29 | 35 | 25 | 27 | 0 | 122 |
| Item 8 Called Upon To Mediate Diff Opinion | 1 | 23 | 36 | 32 | 30 | 0 | 122 |
| Category II (Public Speaking) | | | | | | | |
| Item 10 Pres Of Insti Advised On Speaking Tech | 2 | 2 | 11 | 9 | 98 | 0 | 122 |
| Item 11 Pub Speeches On Behalf Of The Insti | 4 | 19 | 31 | 19 | 39 | 0 | 122 |
| Item 14 Called Upon To Write Speeches For Admin | 0 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 110 | 0 | 122 |
| Category III (Parliamentarian) | | | | | | | |
| Item 9 Served As Parliamentarian For Fac Leg | 6 | 7 | 14 | 8 | 87 | 0 | 122 |
| Category IV (Vertical Communication) | | | | | | | |
| Item 12 Cons By Adm To Imp Vert Comm Downward | 1 | 1 | 3 | 20 | 97 | 0 | 122 |
| Item 13 Cons By Adm To Imp Vert Comm Upward | 1 | 1 | 7 | 20 | 93 | 0 | 122 |
| Category V (Listening) | | | | | | | |
| Item 15 Workshop In Listening For Top Admin Inst | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 111 | 0 | 122 |

## Discussion

Service in committee work appears to be high in frequency among the respondents particularly on the departmental level. Amount of service opportunities probably compare favorably with other disciplines in the faculty. However, when we look at the type of service that is rendered, there is little to no opportunity for service to the committee in the capacity of a communication expert. These members of the speech communication discipline evidently render service to the institution in the form of something other than mediation of conflict, committee leadership, a trouble shooter for organizational communication problems within the committee, improvement in the use of persuasion in committee work, or as an expert in the use of mass communication media.

Involvement as a speaker or speech writer for upper level administrators is also a missed opportunity that could be offered by an institution. An interesting aside on this type of service that is revealed in the survey results is that even those speech communication professors with the rank and long term service reports little opportunity to be in the role of speaker or speech writer. Two of the respondents who reported no opportunity to assume the role of speech consultant to administrators are published authors of basic speech texts.

One's colleagues on the faculty apparently ignore the expertise in parliamentary procedure when consideration for parliamentarian to the faculty senate is made. Seventy-two percent of the respondents reported to have never served in their faculty legislative body in the capacity of parliamentarian.

The record for involvement in advising administrators in ways of improving vertical communication is more dismal than being tapped as parliamentarian. Perhaps we could assume that higher education has little or no problem with vertical communication. If you believe there is little or no problem in the area of communication between upper level administration and rank and file faculty, you haven't been reading the Chronicle lately. It is ironic that higher education perceives itself, in some quarters, as having the answers to the many of the world's problems, but when the institution is examined closely enough we find some of the same problems plaguing our colleges and universities. As an example, the growth of bargaining units for faculty salaries and benefits appears to be a direct result of the breakdown in vertical communication both downward and upward.

When it comes to problems in listening, by upper administration the speech communication faculty member apparently is ignored as a consultant. Ninety-one percent of the respondents indicated they had never been asked to conduct a workshop in listening by their administration. We, as a discipline, offer such consultative services to anyone wishing to avail themselves of our expertise, but only the world of business apparently takes advantage of it as reflected in the growing opportunities as consultants to business being reported.[3]

A reservation or two should be inserted in these closing remarks regarding the findings in this study. Several respondents volunteered their opinions about their administrations, their experiences, and their evaluation of the questionnaire used in this study. A tone of acrimony and general dissatisfaction with

the treatment the respondent had been afforded by his administration was common. Lack of appreciation of the individual's value to the institution was a particular complaint most often listed. Of course, if a respondent was at odds with his university, he would color his description of that relationship with a tone of acrimony. Others related positive experiences in being consulted by upper level administration regarding corrective communication input, but they would rationalize that their experiences were probably unique when compared to their colleagues elsewhere. Perhaps these respondents were attempting to balance what they considered as unique in their experience with what they know is the harsh reality of being ignored by the large throughout higher education.

The more provocative feedback for the author was that from the respondent who analyzed the appropriateness and usefulness of the survey instrument. He pointed out the fact that many service committee opportunities are not a matter of choice of the faculty member. Instead, committee assignments are made on the basis of departmental and collegiate representation and many times on the social factors of cooperativeness and being know on campus. Therefore, according to the respondent, the survey instrument was limited in value due to the faculty assumption that people serve on committees or work with administration, because they have a particular expertise to draw upon.

## Footnotes

1 AAUP Bulletin, September, 1978

2 See the accompaning list of participating institutions

3 Maxine S. Ferris, "Self-Employment as a Consultant," Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, 18 (1976), 38-39

Colleges and Universities Included Among Respondents in This Study *

(1) Ball State University
(2) Bradley University
(3) Buena Vista College
(4) California State University
(5) Central Michigan University
(6) Central Missouri State University
(7) Chaffey College
(8) Chemeketa Community College
(9) Colorado State University
(10) Cuyahuga Community College
(11) Detroit Bible College
(12) Dillard University
(13) Dordt College
(14) East Montana College
(15) Eastern New Mexico University
(16) Emerson College
(17) Fairfield University
(18) Green River Community College
(19) Golden West College
(20) Goshen College
(21) Guilford Technical Institute
(22) Harding University
(23) Howard University
(24) Hunter College
(25) Illinois State University



* There were multiple respondents in some institutions

Colleges and Universities Included Among Respondents in This Study (cont.)

(26) Imperial Valley Community College
(27) Indiana University
(28) Iona College
(29) Iowa Central Community College
(30) James Madison University
(31) Kalamazoo College
(32) Kearney State College
(33) Lehman College
(34) Long Beach City College
(35) Macalester College
(36) Manatee Junior College
(37) Mankato State University
(38) Martin Luther College
(39) Michigan State University
(40) Mississippi State University
(41) Missouri Western State College
(42) Moorhead State University
(43) Morningside College
(44) Murray State University
(45) National University
(46) New Mexico State University
(47) North Caroline State University
(48) Ohio State University
(49) Ohio University
(50) Oklahoma State University

Colleges and Universities Included Among Respondents in this Study (cont.)

(51) Pace University
(52) Philadelphia Community College
(53) Platte Community College
(54) Purdue University
(55) Rutgers University
(56) Salem College
(57) Salisbury State College
(58) Sam Houston State University
(59) Sam Houston University
(60) Southern Illinois University
(61) St. Johns University
(62) Suny College
(63) Syracuse University
(64) Tennissee State University
(65) Texas Luthern College
(66) Tomkins Cortland Community College
(67) Trenton State College
(68) University of Arkansas
(69) University of Arizona
(70) University of California
(71) University of Colorado
(72) University of Connecticut
(73) University of Florida
(74) University of Hawaii
(75) University of Houston

Colleges and Universities Included Among Respondents in This Study (cont.)

(76) University of Iowa
(77) University of Kansas
(78) University of Kentucky
(79) University of Maine
(80) University of Massachusetts
(81) University of Michigan
(82) University of Minnesota
(83) University of Nebraska
(84) University of North Carolina
(85) University of Northern Iowa
(86) University of Oklahoma
(87) University of Oregon
(88) University of Pittsburgh
(89) University of Phode Island
(90) University of South Carolina
(91) University of South West Louisiana
(92) University of Utah
(93) University of Wisconsin
(94) Utah State University
(95) Washburn University
(96) Washington State University
(97) West Georgia College
(98) West Virginia University
(99) Western Illinois University
(100) Western Michigan University